

**Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project**  
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**Ethan Jodziewicz**  
**Upright and Electric Bassist, Nashville**

**Interviewee:** Ethan Jodziewicz

**Interviewers:** Brad Schrandt

**Subjects:** COVID-19, pandemic, musical work, bass, touring, travel, gig, folk music, music festival, record, contra dance, fiddle, home recording, recording studio, band

**Location:** Nashville, Tennessee via Zoom

**Date:** June 4, 2020

**Interview Length:** 00:59:52

**File Name:** JodziewiczEthan\_2020\_C19\_Video\_Interview\_Completed.mp4

BRAD SCHRANDT 00:00:15: Gotta do the formal introduction. Hello, everybody. My name is Brad Schrandt. Today is June 4, 2020. And I'm Olympia, Washington today, creating an oral history on the zoom platform with the great musician Ethan Jodziewicz. Where are you at?

ETHAN JODZIEWICZ 00:00:35: So I'm in— Actually, you cut out right when you started saying my last name, but to set the record straight in case it didn't come through, it's Jodziewicz, Ethan Jodziewicz.

BRAD 00:00:45: Jodziewicz, ahh.

ETHAN 00:00:46: Yeah (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:01:06: I'm in Nashville, Tennessee right now. I'm at my house in Nashville. And, also, I'll just say, I grew up in Olympia, Washington, and I've known Brad for a long time. And back when I lived in Olympia, I said my last name [JAHZ'-uh-witz].

BRAD 00:01:06: Ah.

ETHAN 00:01:07: And it was after I moved away that I started, I learned like the more proper Polish way of saying it and so now I say [Yo-JEH'-vitz].

BRAD 00:01:17: Yeah, well, that's good. I'll write that pronunciation.

ETHAN 00:01:20: Nice (*laughs*)

BRAD 00:01:22: Cool. Alright, well, today we're going to be basically talking about what it was like to be a musician, you know, pre COVID-19 what it's like right now, because we're right in the middle of it. Hopefully we're right in the end of it, and talking about the future and kind of what we perceive as the impacts being on what's happening right now. So we'll just start, you know, something like this. Tell me a little bit about yourself like when and what kind of got you into music.

ETHAN 00:01:51: So I, I mean, I, I felt a connection to music at a really young age. My mom would probably say that she gave it to me because she was singing in a choir when she was pregnant with me, but we just listened to a lot of records at the house, and I've always found myself really moved by it, but especially drawn to the bass part in different things. And I'd just be running around the house or the yard like improvising, based on what we just heard, you know, maybe listen to some Joni Mitchell or we listened to some Johann Strauss like Viennese waltzes or something. Anyway, so I just— I always felt like I wanted to play music. And at a certain point, you know, in the public school system, you can in Olympia it was, if you're in fourth grade, you can start playing a stringed instrument. My sister is two years older. When she was in fourth grade, my mom suggested that she pick up an instrument and she kind of sort of wanted to do it, but wasn't—didn't totally have her heart in it and I wanted to play the bass so badly. (*Brad laughs*) So I was just like, "I know I'm not in fourth grade yet, but like if she gets to, you know, rent a viola like I get to rent a bass."

ETHAN 00:03:02: So, it just, it always felt like I just had to do it, you know, type of thing. And so I started on bass. I mean, I started on a cello with bass strings, and eventually got tall enough that I could play real bass.

BRAD 00:03:18: Nice.

ETHAN 00:03:18: And basically was convinced that I wanted to be a classical musician. Like when I was seven years old, I was like, you know, I'm gonna be in a symphony full-time. Like, that time of my life couldn't come soon enough. And kind of felt a little closed off to other things, and then I went to when I entered middle school, Brad, the interviewer here, was just helping start a jazz band program at our school. And I was like, Alright, well, I think I could do that, like, you could read the book, and it had written out basslines and stuff and I sort of grudgingly did it because I was, like, I just want to play classical music. And lo and behold, the first rehearsal in, I was like, Oh, dang, this is cool, too. This is

really fun, and, also, you don't have to play what's written in the book. Like, you can hear the changes and you can start making up your own thing and that was encouraged. And that was so exciting to me. And so that that sort of— Brad and Drew, the other teacher, like [were] giving a lot of recordings that we could check out and I was just getting turned on all this stuff. Heard like Jaco Pastorius for the first time, heard Weather Report for the first time. It was like brain explosion, and then at the same time I learned about this guy Edgar Meyer, who turned into a huge bass hero of mine too, and got turned on to his music, which a lot of it is in the realm of like fiddle tunes and American more like American folk traditional, I guess, type of thing, or at least related to it. And so that turned me on to this whole world of contra dance music and stuff like that to begin with. So, I basically went from feeling like I had—knew exactly what I wanted to do when I was seven to being like, I want to play every possible music (*Brad laughs*) possible as best as I can, if it's feeling good at the moment, and just like try it all and, you know.

BRAD 00:05:24: Nice. I totally remember asking you like, "Hey, do you know Jaco Pastorius is? And you were like, "No." And I said, "Okay," (*laughs*). Next week I came back like, "Here (*laughs*) (*gestures handing something to Ethan*), go listen to this."

ETHAN 00:05:38: Totally. I probably still have that compilation CD somewhere. (*Brad laughs*) It was like that and the Maceo Parker version of The Chicken and stuff like— (*laughs*)

BRAD 00:05:50: That's funny.

BRAD 00:05:52: So let me ask you this: so, you're into music, you're liking it, What or when was the first time you felt like Wow, I think I'm going to be a professional musician, that's what I'm going for, and what was like the first "Oh, wow, I'm a pro"— the feeling of, be it the first paycheck or the first real gig, or the first— that feeling of like, yeah, I'm in it. What was that experience about?

ETHAN 00:06:22: That's a really— I love that question because, like I said, when I was seven, the day I brought my first instrument home, I knew I wanted to be a professional musician, but I had no idea, actually, what that meant. At that point, (*laughs*) I had an idea about—I don't know. So the first— (*sighs*) I'm trying to remember what came first. There were two Basically, like, first moments that happened when I was in middle school. So, I guess that's—how old are you, like 13 or 14 or something like that?

BRAD 00:06:53: Something like that, yeah.

ETHAN 00:06:53: So one was—also Brad Schrandt had a gig at the Capitol Theater in Olympia, and we'd had—I'd probably been to four jazz band rehearsals or something, and Brad and Drew, the teachers, were like, "Hey, kid, you can play. Want to come do a tune with us on this gig? Just pick a tune."

And so I picked Moondance, a Van Morrison tune, and learned the bassline on it, and showed up to rehearsal at your house and play—sat in with the band and it was these pro musicians, and then the real bass player who was on the gig came in and he had a fretless electric and I'd never seen that before. And it was so cool. So I went and got to do that gig at a real theater and there was a real audience there and the lights were on and (*Brad laughs*) you couldn't even see the audience, and I just remember having so much fun doing that and being being so excited that these other people— Because you know how it goes—in a school orchestra or a band, it's lovely that everybody is involved and everybody—anybody who wants to play can. But the feeling of actually going with people who really know what they're doing, and— I had a decent idea of what I was doing for that age, and so felt so boosted by that. You know, you put a bunch of beginners together, and you feel like a beginner, but you take someone who's an intermediate beginner and you put them with a bunch of pros and you feel like you're a pro for a second. (*Brad laughs*) So that was a really cool feeling. That wasn't a paid gig, that was just sit in and check it out. The first paid gig I did was for the Capitol Playhouse in Olympia. I got called. Somebody recommended me to sub a couple shows for this musical *Forever Plaid*, which was, like, four dudes in plaid coats singing doo-wop songs for the whole musical and the whole—the band was just piano and bass and they stood on a pedestal in the back of the stage. And I was little, you know, I was like a little kid. I was like 13 years old, and it was these grown men in the cast and the pianist was this also fully-grown woman, and I didn't even perform the show. I did two rehearsals and they called and said, "Another guy who has played to us before popped into town, and we decided we're going to have him do the shows."

ETHAN 00:07:03: And they said, It doesn't have anything to do with your playing, you were playing great. But that was all they left it at, and I just figured that I didn't look the part like that. I was like—I looked out of place there because I was this young kid.

BRAD 00:09:45: Who's that little kid in the back? Yeah (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:10:00: So I probably made like 30 or 50 bucks or something from doing those rehearsals. But I remember sitting at the ping pong table at break in middle school and someone was like, What are you doing tonight? And I said, Oh, I'm going to work (*Brad laughs*) and I said it like that because it actually felt like work because it was like you go to these specific times and you get a check at the end, you know?

BRAD 00:10:22: Mmhmm

ETHAN 00:10:23: So that was the first experience with that and sort of feeling what that was like.

BRAD 00:10:30: Nice. That's awesome. (*Ethan laughs*) Well that leads into this next question. So let me ask you this, What was the music scene like when you started as to where? Well, what am I saying here? So what was the music scene like when you started playing professionally, when—and being a part of

the scene like, Okay, I'm in the scene, I'm gigging professionally, what was it like, as far as: What kind of venues? What kind of other bands? What kind of pay? What kind of experience was the beginnings of your professional career?

ETHAN 00:11:08: So I would say there was kind of two sides to the working part of my thing in Olympia. One was that I got really involved with the contra dance scene. So, contra dancing is a social dance that originated from New England, but also has ties to English country dancing, and it's sort of an all-inclusive—Anybody can dance, you can learn the dances on the spot, there's a caller, everything like that. I had in—also in middle school— apparently we're dwelling on that part of my life quite a bit, but honestly— I mean, that's when a lot of stuff really felt like it started happening. For my eighth grade project, I had written music for a play that we were doing at school, it was not a musical and I wrote background music to it. And I asked this guy, Andrew Foster, who had also gone to the middle school and was now in high school, who was a really talented violin player—asked if he'd come play the violin part. And I had heard that he was also a fiddle player, and I'd recently got turned on to the idea of what fiddle music was, and I'd also just recently gone to my first contra dance and just for three hours danced to this stuff that was just these repetitive fiddle tunes that was just really groovy, 32 bars, and then it repeats, and it just— By the end of those three hours, I was smiling so much my face hurt, and so then I "hired" Andrew for this gig at the middle school, and I learned that he played contra dance fiddle tunes, too. And his stepsister also did, and then they had another friend who lived down in Centralia named Scotty who played piano, and they were trying to start a contra dance band because all their parents played, too, and they were like, We want to do this now. And they said, "We could use a bass player. So what do you say? Want to try it out? And we even have a gig booked."

BRAD 00:13:13: Nice.

ETHAN 00:13:14: And I think it was probably at the South Bay Grange in Olympia. Maybe it was our first gig. I forget. It might have been at Evergreen [State College] too. So we had a rehearsal, you know, and I played—I was playing, like, jazzy basslines under the stuff and they're like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. (*Brad laughs*) Can you just go like, boom, boom, boom, boom?"

ETHAN 00:13:39: And I was like, Yeah, I can do that. I didn't think that's what the job was. But that's what the job was, and that—it opened up that world to me, too, of playing simple—that is really meaningful in a bassline. So, that scene was basically—Like I said, it's very inclusive, so many people who dance also play instruments and also have bands, and it's not a performance so nobody's standing there, like sitting in their chair, you know, checking out your stuff. They're just dancing to you, and they might take a break for a minute, but it was this amazing feeling of being able to be experimental within the genre without any risk of—if you screw up something or you missed a lick or played out of tune or something, nobody's really paying attention that close, and so that— I was always interested in playing fiddle tunes on the bass, learning how to actually learn their bowings, learn how to move all over the instrument to make these tunes work, and so I was able to start experimenting with that during the

dances, too, where it felt a little more free and learn some other instruments, too. But those—anyway, to not get too off- topic to exactly the question you asked, those gigs at that time, as far as you asked about what stuff was paying? I would say a good gig then was, like, if you came home with 150 bucks you were stoked. (*Brad laughs*) And that would be, like, pretty decent. I mean, you could easily go play a contra dance and come home with 50 bucks, but either way it was something, you know?

BRAD 00:15:24: Yeah.

ETHAN 00:15:25: And it was a lot more than the nothing I was making playing music before that, you know?

BRAD 00:15:31: Yeah (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:15:33: And so that was cool and so we would do— Our band, The Retrospectacles, it was called—we would do the West Coast circuit. So we do like Olympia, Seattle, Portland, Bellingham, occasionally down into California, stuff like that. And then we started doing dance camps also where you'll get hired to go someplace for a whole weekend and they'll pay you a little more, and you're the on-staff band and people dance to you two times a day for three days.

BRAD 00:16:07: How did you land that gig? Was somebody in the band connected, or did somebody reach out to you guys because they were a dance, or—?

ETHAN 00:16:13: I think probably the first one of those we did, we probably connected with the person at the [Northwest] Folklife Festival in Seattle because we would play—they have huge contra dances there at the Roadhouse building. Where a normal contra dance in Seattle or something would maybe be 100 people tops, but it was like 500 people in those Folklife dances, and people from all over the region would come there. So I'm sure—I would imagine somebody probably heard us there for the first time, but we also made a record. That was the first record I ever made was with that band. And so that was—we were able to sell that and our name would spread a little bit more. I think people probably just liked us—a lot of it because we were young, because the contra dance crowd, a lot of it, at least in that area, was more of an older crowd. And so I think part of it was just this young energy they really liked, you know?

BRAD 00:17:16: Oh nice.

ETHAN 00:17:17: Anyway, so that was the contra dance side. The other side, which, again, you were very involved in. So, Brad ran a student band program that was extracurricular to the jazz band at school that was once a week you get together, you'd learn how to arrange tunes. You'd learn—start learning how to play over changes, learn different types of grooves, learn how to make different elements in a band mesh together in a nice way and nobody's playing too much and nobody's playing too little, and

that kind of stuff. And also, you were really instrumental—I still, to this day, will mention you regularly as the guy who taught me how to gig because you were—just the nitty gritty stuff that people might think you just know how to do. You taught us how to write a setlist, like what needs to be on your setlist, like, you should probably write the key of the tune if you don't know. If there's a couple chord changes you can't remember, maybe the bridge is a little tough, but you don't want to have a chart up in front of you at the gig, just write, like, the bridge small next to the title, so then you can look at your cheat sheet. You taught us about, This is a quarter inch cable, and you should take care of your quarter inch cable and don't yank it out of your instrument because you'll break it, you know, and always bring spare strings to the gig and never expect that all the gear you're going to need is necessarily going to be there. Make sure you have a backup amp in your car in case they don't actually have an amp for you, all that kind of stuff. And so Brad would book these gigs for us around town that would be these variety nights, where one of the student bands might open it or two of the student bands would open it and then whatever Brad's project at the time was would close it down. Those were so cool. I mean, I don't think any money was really ever made on those because—

BRAD 00:19:21: I paid to do those gigs (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:19:23: Exactly. Like you're paying—you pay the venue, there's the overhead for the club, and you got to hire a sound guy, maybe, or you run your own sound or whatever it is, you know, but those were the first things that felt more like gigs to me. The contra dances was, like, going to play a dance, but then the stuff that you were helping organize, was more like gigs, and, make sure you had a couple tunes really cookin' and go play 'em and, you know— Like I said, there wasn't ever any money in those, but they were, like, invaluable to me. It wasn't about that at all.

BRAD 00:20:07: Cool. So what differences— Can you describe the differences from the music scene from the time that you started to where you were in January of 2020?

ETHAN 00:20:20: Cool, nice.

BRAD 00:20:21: The progressive arc as it went up, as it were.

ETHAN 00:20:23: Cool. So I— Like I said, when I was young, I was set on being a classical musician. I was feeling like I was even going to start auditioning for music conservatories while I was in high school, and there's a few places around the country that'll let you finish high school while you're in college. Like, if you're really talented, you can get in early. And I was feeling some pressure, too, from—not necessarily from my teacher, but various people I've met at different music camps and stuff like classical music camps, were like Man, you should try out for my school or you should—you have such potential, you don't want to waste it. And I was just starting to get burnt out on how I was approaching music—how I was approaching the classical music thing. And so, long story short, basically, I, in high school, decided I wasn't going to go to conservatory right away. Or at that point, I

didn't think at all. I was like, Maybe I'll go do a wilderness skills apprenticeship, or maybe I'll hike the Pacific Crest Trail.

BRAD 00:21:30: Oh, I remember that.

ETHAN 00:21:31: Or maybe I was going to learn how to build instruments. And so I ended up going to Evergreen [State College] for a year, which is in Olympia, Washington. It's like—you know this, obviously, but for those who check this out, you know, it's like no grades, no required classes.

BRAD 00:21:46: Liberal arts college.

ETHAN 00:21:48: Yeah. (*laughs*) And it's amazing. But I went there for a year and took the only—one of the only music programs they were offering, which is called music and consciousness. And that was pretty sweet. But I woke up—I just kind of woke up one morning, I was like, Alright, I think I'm ready to go to music school now. Started trying out for music schools that I was interested in and that I thought I could get into and who had applications open at that time and I ended up—I was accepted to a couple places, but chose to go to Ithaca College in upstate New York. I'd worked with the teacher Nick Walker there before at a music camp I'd gone to and he's super open-minded, all genres welcome, just super versatile bass player and with really high standards for your technique and your tone and all that kind of stuff too. So I moved to Ithaca. I packed up my Volvo with everything I owned and moved out to Ithaca. And, basically, I knew a couple people in town there already through the contra dance scene. So I think—I was actually looking back at this recently and in one of my planners, out of curiosity, it was like the second week I was in town I had a gig already in Ithaca. And it just started spreading. I mean, I was basically—any gig that was offered, I wanted to take because I wanted to be in school, but I also wanted to be out working as much as I could, and so I just take anything that was offered to me, and I slowly started meeting people in town. Ithaca has a legacy of incredible musicians living there in this small sequestered town in the Finger Lakes. And one—I guess one of the most—the biggest shooting off point there was where a guy who I had played a contra dance with gave me a call and said, "Hey, I am playing on this record right now. Or, we're done doing the record, but we didn't have a bass player on the session and we realize there's one tune that's just not working without a bass player. Do you think you could come in and overdub bass on this?"

ETHAN 00:24:03: And, you know, aside from the record I made with my contra dance band, I hadn't done anything that felt like pro. We recorded in the guy's house and had mattresses up between us for that, but this was, like, in a real studio, and so I practice this bassline, made sure I had it good, went and played the session, and it went well and the engineer took down my number. And he's like, "Definitely, I'll give you a call."

ETHAN 00:24:30: A month or two later, he's like, "Hey, can you come do this full length record with this singer-songwriter who's from this area?"



ETHAN 00:24:36: And so I came in and got to do that and met the people who were playing on that session, who were people— a couple of musicians from The Horse Flies, which was a pretty well—in the 80s they were on MTV. They're like psychedelic old time string band. But they're super legends and great people. So I met Richie Stearns and Judy Hyman on that session, and, like, the very next day, Richie calls me and he's like, "Hey, man, our bass player bailed on a gig. Can you come play this gig?"

ETHAN 00:25:05: And so it just— You know, basically, I could make a web of all the things that started happening and just in Ithaca, the projects that came up. And so all that stuff that was happening in the Finger Lakes was great. And then I had a chance— There's a bluegrass festival in Ithaca that I volunteered at as a student and Darol Anger was playing at it. And Darol Anger was one of my big heroes of music. He was co-founder of the Turtle Island String Quartet—amazing jazz, violin player and fiddle player. If you ever heard Car Talk, he's the fiddle player on the theme song for that. And he's playing this festival and I'm like, holy crap, you know, like Darol Anger's on this. And I'm like, I gotta meet him and I was a little nervous, and I was really working on improvising with the bow and stuff. Then I ran into him in the hallway at the hotel where this festival is happening and I was like, "Hey, man, like, I'm Ethan. Love your playing. Do you think we could jam later?" And he was so nice. He was just like, "Yeah, totally. Here's my cell phone number. Call me after the gig."

ETHAN 00:26:15: So I went to the concert, he was playing with Tony Trischka Band. And then Sierra Hull was also on the ticket. That was the first I'd ever heard her play. And then Darol and I got together later that night, and jammed and had this great connection right away. And he's that— He was really the one— And he's helped other young musicians too. I think a lot of people would count him as a major influence and support in their lives, but he basically liked me as a person, loved my playing, and started helping open doors for me, really. He got me out to Boston to meet some other guys that were starting a band with him that I ended up playing with for four years. And when we would go out and do festivals, he would always pull over people and say like, Hey, you got to meet Ethan, he's a great up-and-coming bass player, you guys should play some time. And it'd be people who are like heroes of mine, whose records I'd heard you know, like "Yo, Sam Bush. You know, Sam bush is over there. Here. Come on, let me introduce you to him."

ETHAN 00:27:16: Stuff like that, and so that just—the world started opening up with that kind of into the, what I would call the new acoustic music scene, which is largely what I've been part of for the last handful of years, which is a conglomeration of bluegrass and old time fiddle music and jazz and whatever else.

ETHAN 00:27:41: Anyway, in 2013, I transferred schools to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philly, which was a longtime dream of mine to go there. I took a leave of absence from Ithaca College to take six months to practice to audition for it, because it's—they have a lower acceptance rate than Harvard. It's like one one bass player a year, 4% of the applicants that go out for Curtis at all get in, and one bass

player a year. I was just, like, I don't want to mess this up, I'm gonna give it my all and take this one chance to get in. And I was fortunate enough to be accepted. And that meant that I got to study with two of my bass heroes is Hal Robinson, who's the principal of the Philly Orchestra, and Edgar Meyer, the guy I mentioned earlier who's like the virtuoso, and whose recordings I've listened to for so many years. And Edgar, of course, is very well-connected in that new acoustic scene as well. And at some point in my first semester there he said, "Hey, can you give me a couple of YouTube videos of you just—doesn't matter what they are, just you doing your thing. There's a friend of mine doing a record and I want to recommend you for it. I'm not sure if they're gonna use a bass player on it or not."

ETHAN 00:29:01: And so I sent him some stuff and I didn't hear anything for a few months, and I figured it just went away. And then that summer, the first summer after my first year at Curtis, I was out teaching at a music camp in Mount Shasta, California, sleeping in a tipi, not checking my email, didn't have an iPhone at that point. Midway through the week I checked my email—I went over where you could get WiFi and check my email and an email pops up from Bailiff fleck and and it just that subject line says from baileigh are from Béla Fleck, and I'm like, holy crap. I looked at the date on it. It was like from five days ago—

ETHAN 00:29:39: I was just like, Oh, no. And he wrote and he said, "Hey, I'm producing this record for this mandolin player, Sierra Hull, and we were going to try and do it as just a mandolin and voice solo thing, but we decided we want a bass player and Edgar shot us your information. Is there a chance you're interested and could you get together with Sierra and Nashville to see how you fit together?"

BRAD 00:30:03: Oh, geez.

ETHAN 00:30:03: And lo and behold, I was on a tour with another project that went through Nashville later that summer. It was my first time there. We played the gig. I invited Sierra out to it. And then the next day I went over to her house and we just played through a bunch of her new songs. And it was like this immediate connection. She's like, this amazing virtuoso, you know, and great singer and songwriter and all this stuff, too. And we were—it felt like this even match, where both of us had such a high standard for our playing and such an interest in pushing our own levels. So basically, we did that first hang and she wrote me up and said, "Hey, do you want to do this record? We're recording at Béla's house later this year," and they just started flying me out once or twice a month to do pre-production and help arrange the songs and everything and we recorded the record that winter and basically from—

BRAD 00:31:01: What year was that, approximately?

ETHAN 00:31:03: Oh, that was 2000. That was the winter of 2014.

BRAD 00:31:05: Okay.

ETHAN 00:31:11: So yeah, so we made that record, then. The record didn't come out till 2016 but we started touring the music at that point. So I was gone from school like every weekend, pretty much like out playing with Sierra and just doing this duo thing and these highly arranged tunes with lots of room to spread out and lots of soloing and just both of the mandolin and the bass both really well featured. And so that just gave me the chance to play a lot more festival stages, like we played the Grand Ole Opry, we played—later did Telluride Bluegrass Festival. Some of these things I've heard of for years, you know, that I got to go do. So anyway, I played with her. I played with her for four years. And did other projects within there— That was sort of my main gig for four years. And, in the meantime, did a short stint in Boston after I left Philly and then moved to Nashville in the winter, in January 2016 and that was right when Sierra's album was coming out. We were going to be doing a ton of touring and I wanted to come down here anyway because a lot of great people live here and have been moving here, you know, so I moved down and then just went right on the road with Sierra. Anyway, so I played with her— I played with her pretty much full time until 2018 and, and then I got an offer from this band The Milk Carton Kids, which is a great Americana songwriter— Much more song oriented. Sierra's thing had a lot of picking and playing and soloing with the songs and The Milk Carton Kids is more just like utterly gorgeous songs. You know? And I've been with Sierra's thing for four years, we haven't had a new record come out yet, and I was excited about the opportunity to do something new, play with other people, was the first time getting to tour on a tour bus. That was a cool thing. Like before that all the touring I've done is like you hop in the van and you drive yourselves places and you load into the hotel and you load back out and stuff. And and with Milk Carton Kids, it was the whole other thing, like you sleep in your bunk on the bus, you have crew that's bringing your gear in and out of the venue, and the the music— I was playing with a full band again, which I hadn't done on the road for a while—drummer and all that stuff. So I played— I did their album release tour, which is about a year up to 2019—yeah, that was last year.

ETHAN 00:33:53: So, that gig wrapped up last summer. And then basically what was happening up to the point that COVID hit was I've been starting to work on my own music a bunch more with a couple guys in Nashville and playing gigs and doing a couple small tours, just writing fusion jazz stuff. And what I had booked for much of this year was I was going to be doing a bunch of touring with Eva O'Donovan, who's another hero of mine, who is an incredible vocalist. And she was doing a tour that was gonna be kind of spaced out over this whole year in the US and in Europe, playing a bunch of her music with arrangements for string quartet—two violins, viola and bass. And so we got to the first gig. We rehearsed two days in New York, and then we played the first gig, and the next morning, we got a text from the tour manager that said, "Tour's canceled. Let me know what airline you want to fly home." (*laughs*)

BRAD 00:34:02: Oh, jeez.

ETHAN 00:34:18: And we got up that morning, we had an in-studio booked at a radio station in Boston, and we went and did that and got to do a nice little video shoot of a couple of her songs. And then we

hopped our planes home, and I've been home ever since. That was March 12 that we got sent home and I believe March 13 is the day that is sort of recognized as the day that stuff started shutting down.

BRAD 00:35:33: Yeah, U dub [University of Washington] it was the sixth that's—

ETHAN 00:35:33: Oh, wow,

BRAD 00:35:34: [how long I've had] this thing growing out (*points to beard*). Oh, I'm not gonna do anything until [?that happens?]. Wow. So what did you think when you heard like, oh, things are starting to close down, I wonder how long it'll be— Did you think it was gonna be the shorter thing or did you think it was gonna have the impact it did right off the bat?

ETHAN 00:35:54: I don't know, man. I mean, the thing is that the majority— the general attitude among musicians at that point was that it was going to be temporary. Like people were canceling their gigs and rebooking them for like a month later.

BRAD 00:36:13: Hmm.

ETHAN 00:36:13: I thought Eva's team was really smart because they canceled the tour and immediately asked us what availability we had in September and October, and they quickly moved the whole tour to September, October. That felt to me— that felt like, Ah, they're seeing the writing on the wall, you know, let's just like let's hold off on it and wait till then. And now here we are in June and I'm like, Man, are we gonna actually be doing that tour in September and October? I'm not sure.

BRAD 00:36:39: From a school standpoint, a lot of the schools are talking about January.

ETHAN 00:36:43: Wow, just to start school again?

BRAD 00:36:46: Well, they're going to start school— Some schools are just going for like nothing's gonna happen. Some schools are like, We're not going to do anything, but fall quarter because they're expecting a bump in the resurgence as they've done research on pandemics. There's always, like, a spike and then it goes down and then there's usually another bump. And yeah, they were hoping with the lockdown that the next bump isn't very big. The hospitals can handle it—because it was all about the hospitals wouldn't be able to handle all the people. So they think it might come up again. So, school points— and especially at U Dub [University of Washington] that's such an international community of people from around the world— I mean, it's like 46,000 people go to school there. So—

ETHAN 00:37:25: (*exhales heavily*) Yeah.

BRAD 00:37:26: Yeah— So they're like, Oh, well, we're getting they're gonna try kind of a hybrid thing. But in talking to some of my— teachers and some of the faculties at other schools, they're like, January, the beginning of—would either be the second quarter or the next semester is probably when they're going to have enough time to fully reassess, and that's kind of what they're all shooting for right now. But even that's kind of like, based on I don't know what (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:37:52: Yeah, right. There's just—there isn't any way of knowing right now. And I get it because, you know, the people have their booking agency, and they have their managers, they have stuff who—their job is to make sure people's careers are moving ahead. And so what's the booking agent going to do right now except for try and figure out when to book gigs make sure they have holds on stuff so on the off chance that we can tour in September, we can go tour and you didn't lose your chance to get those gigs. So it's kind of interesting right now I have people asking me to hold dates for next January, and I am but I'm also kinda like I don't know if those are gonna happen. Basically everything feels—I mean I've never felt, since I started playing music professionally and especially since I started traveling to play music, I've never felt this sedentary before. I've never—I've lived in Nashville—this is my fifth year in Nashville now, and this is the most time in one go that I've ever been here. I bought my house about a year ago and this is the first that I've really felt like I live here.

BRAD 00:39:11: Do all those projects that you wanna (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:39:12: All the projects, yeah. We're sitting right now in the basement because it's the quietest room, but this is—like probably—well, like I know many musicians are doing now, they're making home recording studios.

BRAD 00:39:25: Well, that's what I was gonna ask: when this all came down and everybody's like, okay, so we'll get back to you when it opens up again. (*Ethan laughs*) You know, we're all stuck at home. So do you feel like, technologically speaking, were you prepared or ready for what was going to happen online? And were there any projects where people were like, hey, maybe we can do a recording project or we can do some video projects or—

ETHAN 00:39:51: Yeah.

BRAD 00:39:51: But were you technologically ready to do [it]?

ETHAN 00:39:55: Luckily, luckily, I was. About a year and a half or maybe two years ago, I started investing in some equipment to record at home and started doing remote sessions for people just overdubbing bass on people's tracks. So I've kind of been doing that off and on for the last year and a half, two years. So, you know, it's nothing fancy. I mean, I had an interface already with a couple inputs, and I have a few nice preamps that I use on stage, but they're like Grace Design ones that have nice circuitry that sound good, and I'd invested in some monitors, but up until this point I just— When people

had stuff they needed recorded, I'd do it upstairs in our music room, which is similar looking to yours. It's like instruments and keyboards and all that stuff all over, but basically I've also—one of the things that I was just starting to work on when COVID hit was this new Broadway musical in New York City that's currently being written and they hired me as the bass player in the band, but also to be there now for the work sessions and going in and workshopping the music and demoing it and, and everything. Obviously, New York City has been a hotbed for COVID and there's no way to do anything there now. So they started hiring us for a week at a time, here and there, throughout the last couple months. When there's a new batch of songs that they want to hear what it sounds like with the band, they'll send it out to the band and to the vocalists and everybody records their part from home and so, basically it came—I live here with my girlfriend and the upstairs— The house is fairly open, and so when I have to do a recording project and I was doing it upstairs, I'd asked her to leave the house for most of the day and—I get really nitpicky about stuff when I'm recording myself and it takes longer because you're the one starting and stopping and— Especially with bass, I can't just sit here with a guitar and face the computer and hit go. I have to go over here (*points behind himself*) and play and then lean back out. So, anyway, I moved down here into the basement and what I've been doing—the upgrade I've been doing—you can see a couple of the panels around, but I've been making rockwool panels. I have maybe 10 of them now to help deaden the room and kill the frequencies that I don't want. So that's what I've been up to in here. And so doing those sessions quite a bit. In fact, that's what I was doing all day today was stuff for that Broadway show.

BRAD 00:42:39: Cool. Well, let me ask you this. So, it seemed, to me anyways, like when COVID hit and it suddenly got serious. They just—like there was a big switch that they hit, "Just shut it down." But I don't think it's gonna be like they flip a switch and it all cranks back on so—

ETHAN 00:42:57: No.

BRAD 00:42:57: It's gonna be like a low set. So once they say okay, even if they're like, Hey, we have a cure for COVID, whatever. How do you see your career starting again to where you have a sense of perhaps—I don't want to say normalcy, but what do you foresee, like the future post-COVID meet musician?

ETHAN 00:43:20: Well, (*sighs*) so here's the thing— From my aspect of it, I, as a kid, I always wanted to tour and when I started touring, I loved it so much. And, at a certain point, anything that you do too much over—too much of the same, it can start to feel like work, and you start to think— I mean, I've always had sort of—tried to hold myself to high standards as far as my diet and my amount of exercise and my lifestyle habits. And when you go on the road, you're not sleeping as much as you should, you're not eating as good of food as you would if you were home. You're, you know, blah, blah, blah, and if you're out for 150, 200 days a year, that's most of your year, or at least half of your year where you're not living your lifestyle, the way (*laughs*) you really want to, necessarily, and if you're—if you love the

music you're playing, and you're making money doing it, too, and the opportunities keep coming, it's what you want to do, it makes sense.

ETHAN 00:44:25: But, honestly, this time has been, for me, personally, a very needed respite. It's been very, very nice—we have a big garden going in the backyard now, we haven't bought vegetables in two months, we just eat out of the garden. We're going to go pretty soon and get fishing licenses and fishing poles and start catching our own fish. Like we're, we're trying to live cheaper, we're trying to live more self-sufficiently, within the city like urban—trying to do the urban homestead kind of thing, and that's something I've always wanted to do more of, and it was—it just didn't feel possible when I was on the road. You can't tend a garden if you're gone all the time. And also as far as all the other lifestyle stuff and feeling actually a belonging and home and a belonging in your community, instead of just seeing people at festivals a couple times a year, you actually see people. I mean, not that we've been doing a ton of hanging out, but, you know, we'll still have friends over to sit around the campfire, six to ten feet apart and play some tunes at night, or something. And, you know, everybody brings their own sack lunch or something, you know (*chuckles*). But there's a feeling of actually being home that I really love right now, and it is making me reevaluate what opportunities I want to take, and the reason why I want to take them. Whereas five years ago, if someone was like hop in the van, we'll pay a couple hundred bucks a night, and you won't ever sleep, but, like, we're going to go on tour, and I'd just be like, Heck yeah, I'm in. And now I'm kind of like, (*exhales*) I don't know, maybe I want to—maybe I don't ever want to tour for more than two weeks at a time unless it's like something really particular, or maybe I want to just tour a lot less in general. Maybe I want to really coax, or stoke, the home recording thing or doing sessions in Nashville thing which, here—it's kind of like if you tour, you don't really play a lot of sessions in town because you can never accept them. And if you play a lot of sessions in town, you don't really tour that much because, if you're lucky, you get really busy in town. So maybe I want to do more of that where I can pop into whatever studio—go over to The Sound Emporium and play on a record date and then come home. And so it's definitely been a time of reevaluation for me. The other thing is that coming up in my near future, the Broadway show, I'll be essentially, like, moving to New York, the last information I had, (*Brad laughs*), at the end of May of next year, of 2021. And I have a feeling the show will probably get pushed back more because we've already missed a couple months of work that I would have been in New York City working on the play.

ETHAN 00:47:31: But, basically, I sort of have a general like stop date for touring, essentially. Like, I'll have a day job in New York. I get to go and play on the musical and just go play that six nights a week, and it wasn't something that I necessarily thought I'd be super stoked on a few years ago when I was really stoked about touring, but now the idea of living—even if it's New York City, which—I like I like it here in Nashville, I have a garden. It's not gonna happen like that in New York, but where I can just sleep in my bed every night, do what I want during the day, play sessions during the day, hike during the day, ride my bike, build stuff, whatever, and then, at night, go play the gig, and make a salary doing it. That's kind of exciting to me right now and a thing that I'm— Anyway, I guess what I'm saying is I was gonna have a lot of touring going this year, but that's kind of all gone now, and I— Once the Broadway

show starts, whenever that starts, I'm not going to be able to do those tours. I suppose I could, like you can take a leave of absence from the show, but I might not want to. I might kind of be like, Alright, I'm just gonna be in New York for a while. So I don't know. I know, that's a lot—many aspects to the answer, but I—

BRAD 00:48:56: Well, it's a good point because I think— One of the things that I'll say about touring is you're right. There becomes a sense where it's like A. you kind of want to be home and in your community and with your people. And the road doesn't offer that and B. what you alluded to was the amount of time—I mean, one thing about touring is the gigging is great and the people are great, but it's all those hours of driving someplace or going through the airport and having— It's like, yeah, even though it's all still exciting, it's like wow, I could be at home you know, petting my dog and enjoying my garden and meeting my friends, but instead I'm on the bus.

ETHAN 00:49:36: Well, and the other thing too, that really bears mentioning is— As musicians, I think, our goal, hopefully, if we're in it for the right reasons, is to bring joy to people and peace and love to the planet. You know what I mean?

BRAD 00:49:51: Mmhmm.

ETHAN 00:49:51: Like, that's ultimately what we're trying to do. But like the carbon footprint— My carbon footprint for touring is insane. Most people fly once a year, if that, maybe they go on one vacation. I had a year where I flew 67 times.

BRAD 00:50:11: That's a lot.

ETHAN 00:50:13: And then in between all of those was driving around in the van. I had I had a stack this tall [holds index finger and thumb apart as wide as possible] of TSA [Transportation Security Administration] inspection certificates in my bass flight case, and it's just like how much jet fuel is being burned, or if you're on a bus how much bus fuel is being burned because that thing's idling all day long so your refrigerator keeps running, and the venues—the bigger venues you start playing, they're heating and cooling the whole place and all these people—say you play to 800 people, that's 800 people that drove their cars in from someplace to go there. So there's this huge—it's a thing that is not lost on me even though I will fess up to that like, Yes, my carbon footprint as a touring musician is immense. And it's so much smaller now, and it's still not perfect, it's nowhere near perfect, but it's a lot better. So that matters to me too. You know, there was a talk that— Because, nowadays, you can tune into a public zoom call every night of the week with people discussing something. And there was one that—I think it was Folk Alliance International, this organization, put on and they were talking with different booking agents and people in that about what the future of the touring industry is going to look like, and it was it was called—they named the the talk something like fixing a broken wheel, and it's kind of true. I mean, the touring thing, I don't know how we—how it happened. I mean, (*sighs*) that that became the thing. I



know that some of it has to do with that people can't make money on records like they used to anymore because the record deals either suck or they're not getting enough money from Spotify or whatever. And the only way you can make money is to tour, and if you want to make a decent living as a musician, you have to go play shows, and (*sighs*)— It's just, as we've globalized further and further, it's not— The regionalism of back in the day where, if you were a fiddle player, you might go to your local Grange Hall on Saturday night and play fiddle tunes from your region to those dancers. It's, like, any—everything is accessible, and people want to hear it everywhere, all the time, and people want to go do those things. Like— I love traveling. I've been all over the—well, not all over the world, but I've been to a bunch of different countries I've been to—I think the only state I have left is North Dakota, and it's, it's awesome, but it is a thing. It is a big environmental impact. And so, to be doing an art form that's supposed to be spreading peace and love to the world, and you just kind of block that part out. And so I'm confronting out a lot more now and wondering, too, like, if— When I do start touring again, maybe I set aside the percentage of every paycheck to do the—what's it called? Voluntary carbon tax. Like, buy your own carbon offsets. So like, Okay, I did a plane flight from Nashville to Chicago and back, like, Alright, so if I send in \$58, they can plant two trees, or whatever it is. I've been thinking about that kind of thing. And I don't know.

BRAD 00:53:48: No, that's great. That's great.

ETHAN 00:53:51: At this point, I don't feel like I have to really make too many hard decisions yet, because I'm, like I said before, I'm not convinced—I'm still not convinced that anything I have on the books, in this calendar year, at least, is actually going to happen. Like I'll believe it when I see it, you know?

BRAD 00:54:06: Oh, yeah, I hear ya. I hear that for sure. All my gigs were laid off as well. Well, yeah. Just to get one more question for you.

ETHAN 00:54:15: Cool.

BRAD 00:54:17: So, the interview that we're doing right now is basically for historians of the future to look back when a major, global event happened, and find out what musicians were thinking about and talking about and all that type of stuff. So, there's a famous interviewer and his name is—I'm drawing it—can't remember what his name is. But anyway, he asked this question, it's like, well, let's say 150 years down the future, there's only one or two sentences, short paragraph that we hear from Ethan, and we're wondering what kind of message you would have for musicians of the future about music. (pauses) (*laughs*) In the career of being a musician, the art of being a musician, but if you had to kind of get into, like, a sound bite or so, if you would, what would you say?

ETHAN 00:55:11: Which, as you can tell, from my answers for this whole interview, it's hard for me to keep things short. (*laughs*)

BRAD 00:55:17: (*laughs*) You're not alone.

ETHAN 00:55:20: Pretty verbose when asked questions.

BRAD 00:55:22: Oh, yeah. I mean, you can go a little—but if you had to think about, like, what does it all mean? What would you tell future musicians who look back and are hearing these things about music? What's the real important aspect of it that they should maybe be focusing on, by the time we're all flying around in electric planes that are running off the sun and all that? (*laughs*)

ETHAN 00:55:42: (*laughs*) Yeah, or, like, there's a lot less of us.

BRAD 00:55:50: Yeah. We teleport? I don't know. Yeah.

ETHAN 00:55:53: I don't know. Well, okay. As far as just—even keeping it specific to this moment and what I'm feeling and learning at this moment in time. I think one of the powers of music, or of being a musician, is that you— By going on stage and being as much yourself as you can, expressing yourself as honestly as you can through your music, you're hopefully inspiring the audience, the individuals in the audience to learn how to be more themselves. And—which is such a beautiful thing, and (pauses) the important thing is, to me, that I'm really, staring down right now is that you can learn who you are in your music and you can kind of figure your music out, but you're not gonna— Your music's not gonna be really happenin' until you know who you are, and that means figuring out who you are in the rest of your life, too. You know, what your personality is, what things you want to do and think are important, and whatever else— Basically, during this time, if you're out there touring and you're swept up in the industry—maybe you got some sweet touring gig, maybe you got a sweet record deal, maybe your garage band pals bought a minivan and you're gonna go, dirt bag around the country—just remember to check in with yourself in whatever way you can. It's really easy when you're in a world to feel like that's all the world is, and it's never the case. I've had gigs. I've quit those gigs and moved on to other gigs. That gig might have felt like the entire world and my whole life was seen through that lens then, and then the next gig comes and my life is through a different lens now, and what I'm feeling right now is my life through a lens that I haven't had a chance to, like, really dig into since I started touring. And that is invaluable. So, my goal going forward is to keep checking in and to make sure that I give myself off time that I need and this feels like a momentary retirement. I have a buddy who says rather than retiring when he's 60, or 65, or whatever, he just wants to take, like, 10 short retirements throughout his year, or throughout his life, because he doesn't want to wait to feel what it's like to feel retired. And so I'm just thinking about that kind of thing more and, I guess to future people, I would say you don't need a— You don't necessarily need a global pandemic to allow you to check in with yourself. You just need to remember that you can and give yourself the chance to do that and keep honest with yourself about what you're doing, why you're doing it, if you want to keep doing it, how you want to keep doing it, if you're hanging with the right people, etc, etc, you know,

BRAD 00:59:11: Right on. With that, I will say it's been awesome talking with Ethan Jodziewicz.

ETHAN 00:59:19: Nailed it.

BRAD 00:59:19: Nice, very nice. (*Ethan laughs*) And one very last thing: do I have permission to use our interview for my purposes?

ETHAN 00:59:28: Yeah.

BRAD 00:59:28: For class. Cool.

ETHAN 00:59:29: Yeah, you can do it for class. And you were saying some of the interviews might end up in an archive?

BRAD 00:59:36: Yeah, it's possible that— If that happens, then I'll be in contact. It'll be a piece of paperwork that you'll have to sign that legally says—you'll obviously get to see what the finished project is and you can decide whether you want to sign.

ETHAN 00:59:49: Sweet. Cool.

BRAD 00:59:51: Excellent.